

SELDOM THOUGHT OF AS AN URBAN PLANNER

thoreau says, "i observed that the vitals of the village were the grocery, the bar-room, the post-office, and the bank."

there are two parts to the los altos shopping center, that north of stearns and that south of it. the northern component has a bank, a s.-and-l., a target discount store, and a branch post office. consequently, clustered about these are a bookstore, stationery shop, photocopy shop, music store, thrifty's, travel agency, video store, dry cleaners, and a number of other successful businesses. across the street are a variety of restaurants, dentists, and such. it's walking distance to the nearest bar.

the southern segment has a failing department store, vacancies, and a vast empty parking lot.

A PENCIL WITHOUT AN ERASER

"but isn't poetry expression?" the young man asks me. "i mean, isn't letting-it-all-pour-out the way that ginsberg got down howl and kaddish?"

"yeah," i say, "but it's also the way he's written everything since."

I DON'T SUPPOSE HIS PAYMENT IS IN COPIES

i read in the paper that one of the best-selling children's books of the year is everyone poops.

i'm not accusing this other guy of plagiarism, but just so it's clear that i didn't steal anything from him, let me point out that my books poop, and other poems and son of poop were published in 1972-73, and that my

poem "poop" was published before
then in the wormwood review.

poop, and other poems was,
by the way, a best-seller also,
by small press standards.
everyone poops, in other words,
has only outsold it by about
a million copies.

THE BUNNYFISH

it's what i called my daughter
when she was very young
and just learning to swim.
i would pick her up from lessons
at the outdoor pool,
and every morning she would emerge
with teeth chattering,
she was so slender, so sleek,
her hair wetted back,
and a frown creasing her brow.
i'd sweep her into a long, thick towel,
hug her up into my arms,
and hurry her to the car,
her cold cheek against my warm neck,
rush her home to a hot shower.

now she's a teenager
and these are not easy years
for her or for me.
she thinks i protect her too much,
that her friends have more freedom,
more fun, and maybe they do.
you always hear that you have to
let children learn from their mistakes,
but i don't think you have to let them
make mistakes before they are even
out of high school, out of the house,
that will curtail their lives before
they have even had a chance to live.
so in the necessary tug-of-war of
these years, the tension of her
struggle for independence
(i representing civilization;
she, the discontents of those whose
freedom is restricted) i try at least
to slow things down a little, to let
her have a chance to grow into the
capacity to make the decisions she will
have to make, and i try to assure that
she will have the base of education